

Letter to Bard College from Stuart-Stritzler Levine

About five years ago, four local area senior citizens came to see me. (My daughter, who was then five, called them the “old people”—they were not flattered and she was mistaken.) I was then the dean. They had an idea that they could start what they called a “Lifetime Learning Institute” on our campus. “How can I help?” I responded. I expected a complex proposal which would require the Bard staff to add an extra layer of activity to an already burdened work week or a request for some of our scarce financial support. How much in error I would be was just beginning to unfold.

They had only two requests—classroom space and the opportunity to try to organize and offer some classes for area senior residents who would become members of the newly formed LLI group. I asked, “That’s it?” They replied that if I could allow them to drop by now and then for some advice such would be a good thing. As our initial interview progressed I saw that they were serious and serious-minded and I replied, “Why not!” I knew that on Friday the hallways of our classroom buildings tended to be on the vacant side, to say nothing of the classrooms themselves. I told them we had room on Fridays and they said “We’ll take it.” I did nothing more and now, five years later, this

group—aging only slightly—has hundreds of members, runs dozens of classes and other special educational events. They involve numbers of our faculty and others who reside in the area as teachers. They provide a venue for the labor of only the love of learning, as no payment is ever made to their loyal group of teachers—no money—no usual academic credit—no tests—no grades—just a group of youthful seniors and mostly senior teachers who wish to enjoy the life of the mind.

A few years ago the leadership of the group came to me again and asked how they could repay Bard for its generosity. I said, “We didn’t do anything—you did it all!” In truth all we did was give access to underused space at an unpopular time. They insisted, and we are now in our fourth year of “Seniors to Seniors” awards. This is a program in which the dean and the emeritus dean (me) invite proposals from and select five undergraduate seniors from across our curriculum, and the LLI seniors provide money to support five Bard seniors’ project work.

Then a year or two ago, when I partially moved to the Houston Street campus, they once again asked, “How can we help?” Their generosity followed me. They provide monies to allow a number of

our young people at the Bard High School Early College to do service type work and internships they might not otherwise be able to do. All this from their excess of income over expenses. Every educational business manager can learn from such a fact.

And the group is never done. This year their generosity has spread to two other places on our campus. Apparently their association with some of our faculty prompted an unrestricted grant to our Asian Studies program. Also their wish to support our horticultural department on campus grows out of their love for our place and its extended beauty.

I tell you all of this because it is special and those of the Lifetime Learning Institute are special, and I want all who live and work and go to school here to know of this.

And I say to our benefactors that we all thank you for your generosity. And I speak of generosity with more than just funding in mind. The Lifetime Learning Institute members give us the knowledge of learning as a lifetime pursuit. That our undergraduates see all of them on Friday morning learning that which is new at any age would be enough repayment to Bard. As I have said to them often—they do more for us than we have ever done for them.

Seniors to Seniors 06 *by Dorothy Baran*

LLI is pleased once again to award grants in the amount of \$500 to each of five Bard seniors.

Jenny Hendrix will explore themes of presence and absence in contemporary French poetry from Mallarme to Michel Deguy.

Andrew T. Lench will explore the rural and suburban landscape of the Hudson Valley.

Andrea Muraskin will analyze the corporate responsibility of the garment companies.

Amy Nightingale’s photography project is called: “the portraiture of objects.”

Raluca Albu’s project is an exploration into memory and identity in post-Communist Romania.

Their interests and research should prove very interesting. Be sure to attend our “Seniors to Seniors” tea in May for a short presentation of their work.

News Alerts

A new course, **Olympics of the Mind**, will debut in the Spring. If you are looking for something challenging, interactive and fun, check out this new course. Registration is limited!

Please do not wear fragrances! As many of our members suffer from allergies, or are otherwise discomforted, please refrain from wearing any fragrances — this applies to men as well as women. Thank you for your cooperation.

Bard to Bard to Bard

by Leonard Bard

Over the Thanksgiving holiday, Alex Bard Perlman talked about school with his grandfather, Leonard Bard. **Leonard** and **Elaine Bard** are longtime LLI members .

Alex Bard Perlman is 14 years old and attended The Delta Honors Program at M.S. 54 on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. The Delta Program is for gifted kids whose combined test scores are at least in the 90th percentile

In New York City, students may choose the high schools they wish to attend. A student scoring high enough may get into one of the specialized schools in this category, or can apply to several other specialized schools, such as Bard High School Early College.

Alex took the special test that Bard administers. Scoring above a certain level, he was invited for an interview. Four thousand students applied, but only 130 were accepted by the school after the interviews. Before school started in September, Alex took a math placement test and received a summer reading list.

“Now that I am here, I like Bard, because it is small, and has a culturally diverse population,” Alex noted. “There are about 530 kids from all five boroughs,” he added.

Half of the teachers have Ph.D.s. The faculty is a mix of college professors and Board of Ed teachers, because after 10th grade, the students begin their college program, which is taught by instructors with college certifications.

The Bard High School Early College students graduate after four years with their high school diplomas and a full College Associates degree (full sixty college credits).

Bard High School Early College is located on East Houston Street on Manhattan’s Lower East Side. It was conceived in part by LLI’s very own Bard liaison, emeritus dean Stuart Stritzler-Levine, who now serves as its Dean.

As LLI did last year, this year we look forward to awarding several \$400 grants to support several students’ summer activities program in our “Stipend for Summer Interns for the Bard High School Early College Program”.

People Who Make LLI Hum

by Midge Russo

The Girardis

We all enjoy the hospitality room where coffee and treats are available on class days, but seldom think about the effort that goes into making that asset possible. **Anne Sunners**, chairman of the hospitality committee, reports that among her volunteers and contributors, two special people stand out: **Joan** and **Pete Girardi**.

The Girardis have been working with hospitality since LLI’s incep-

tion. They set up the room on class days and clean it up later in the day. “I can’t seem to beat them,” Anne says. “Regardless of how early I get there, Joan and Pete have already arrived and started the setup.”

Joan and Pete have been Red Hook residents for 16 years, having moved up from Yorktown Heights. They used to visit the area often following a passion for

antiquing. They have a son and daughter-in-law and grandsons aged 12 and 8 who live just a block away. Another son lives nearby and two daughters are in Newburgh and Connecticut.

The Girardis are active in politics in the town of Red Hook, and they dearly love LLI. “We find it stimulating. The classes are wonderful,” Joan says.

Josette Lee

Maybe it’s in the genes. **Josette Lee**, LLI’s curriculum chair, exemplifies the word indefatigable. Josette was a founder of LLI and has worked with course development for the entire time. Even time out for a broken hip and follow-up surgery did not deter her for long.

Each session she must choose twenty courses, twelve to thirteen for Fridays with the others scattered throughout the week. The

entire curriculum committee meets once a month to discuss proposals for courses. Then comes the hard work of defining the scope of the course and finding presenters. Josette says she now delegates much of the work to sub-committee chairpeople. No sooner is one session out of the way than work begins on the next. Much of the committee work involves listening to suggestions from members and working with presenters.

Josette and husband Donald moved to Rhinebeck from Long Island, where she designed and installed historical displays. Now about those genes . . . Josette’s father was an endurance bicycle rider. He teamed with her uncle to ride in marathon bicycle races sometimes lasting as long as six days — 24 hours a day! They rode for a bicycle club called Unione Sportos Italiano. It was through this partnership that her parents met.

Medicare Mumbo-Jumbo

Plan D is challenging. Finally, I got serious and went through the labor intensive procedure of listing all my prescription drugs, what they presently cost, and then compared them on the formulary, which is *only* 81 pages long.

That enabled me to construct the cost of what I presently pay versus the Plan D arrangement.

I then compared this data to the several plans offered by Blue Cross, Group Health Assoc and AARP. Each has different premiums and co-pay arrangements.

However, it was possible to construct models for each, and make my choice with this method.

(As described by a retired Hospital Administrator who is active in LLI in a distant city.)

Do the math!

If you don’t use many medications, it may not even pay to select a Prescription Drug Plan!